nationalism—a concept and word we can clearly do with. In the last essay Guy Bailey, on the basis of Black English Vernacular (BEV) and of early Modern English *be* with the present participle, argues that the spread of *are* can be explained as due to the heavy load shouldered by *be* This is not altogether convincing, since the extra load (mainly as subjunctive) is not particularly great. But, like all the contributors to this volume, he has much to offer for us to ponder, and the whole enterprise is a fine tribute to John H Fisher

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The Names of Comedy. By ANNE BARTON Pp x+222. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990. £22 50

The key terms of this study of names in ancient and modern comedy are taken from Plato's dialogue, the Cratylus, where the idea that names are purely arbitrary is defended by Hermogenes, while Cratylus argues that they express the person named When it comes to names in English comedy it is natural to think of *The Importance of Being Ernest*—'Lady Bracknell', says Jack, alias Ernest, 'I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?' Names can have a magical potential, something apparent in the conventions which govern the choice of product names in modern commerce (e.g. Ford Capri) and in show business, where stage names come to fit better than real names (thus Cary Grant seems the inevitable name of the star who, history records, began life as Archibald Leach), so confirming the magic power of a name. Yet as Russell Jackson points out in his edition of the play, 'Lady Bracknell' herself, a name which seems now as cratylic as the best names in Dickens, was 'Brancaster' in Wilde's first draft, her renaming as 'Bracknell' being apparently prompted by a private joke, the mother of Lord Alfred Douglas happening to live at Bracknell.

One major issue here, that of the arbitrary nature of the verbal sign, is clearly related to general linguistic theory; the other, that one's personality and very self are inextricably linked with one's name, has been studied by modern cultural anthropologists in primitive societies, although it is manifestly not an idea confined to *la pensée sauvage* My own favourite example of this is the name of a plaintiff who once came before a British district officer in colonial Kenya, bearing (to make assurance doubly sure) the magnificent triple-initialled, triple-barrelled name 'A.A A. Umslopagaas Dynamite Macaulay' This witnesses to his perception that magic power inheres in names in the alien white British society

Anne Barton's clearly defined terms, 'cratylic' and 'hermogenic', serve to structure the discussion and make serviceable distinctions. She writes usefully of the name Hal, apparently Falstaff's invented pet name for Prince Harry (like the rival Harry, Hotspur) who becomes Henry, the name of a real historical person, when crowned Shakespeare's most famous character, Hamlet, when he cries 'It is I, Hamlet the Dane', asserts a national and a royal as well as a personal identity On the other hand the exultant hero of *The Revenger's Tragedy* cries out "Tis I, 'tis Vindice, 'tis I!' in an assertion of generic identity, a realized abstraction, revenge It is not to be taken as a merely actual Italian name Wild Halfcan, that stabbed Pots, is also generic, though bordering on the possibly real, whereas 'Bully' is a nickname and 'Bottom' may allude, not to anatomy (as with Pompey Bum) but to his vocation, a 'bottom' being a term from the weaver's trade. Flie-Fornication Andrews is, according to Anne Barton, a recorded real name, but this seems not to disturb the category within drama of names like Jane Nightwork or, possibly, Dylan Thomas's 'Evans the death', the undertaker. (so in the British Army a soldier's serial number might become part of his name, distinguishing 764 Smith from 823 Smith). Marian Hacket is the simplest kind of

name, though possibly signalling inferior rank, whereas the name Bertram in *All's Well* is suggestive of gentle rank but, more importantly, seems obscurely right for his character, in the sense defined by Bernard Shaw and quoted by Anne Barton: Shaw wrote in a letter that he habitually began by writing dialogue for characters he could not name and scarcely knew: 'Then they become more and more familiar, and I learn their names.' Henry James, on the other hand, according to Edith Wharton, would murmur names 'over and over to himself in a low chant, finally creating characters to fit them'. One is tempted to wonder whether Shakespeare, in this respect, was equally capable, on different occasions, of working in the manner of Bernard Shaw or Henry James.

The material on which this study is based is mainly English drama, and it is focused on Shakespeare, yet in the end the book's title is justified, and points to its chief value, which is as a general study, illustrating with copious particular examples the complications in the idea of cratylism. The suggestions about Shakespeare's naming of characters notice his apparent carelessness in some cases, whereas in other instances he displays a minute attentiveness to the subtleties of cratylic naming, especially when mixed with hermogenic naming. But there are deep questions here: how can one tell after it has become a household word whether Petruchio, as a name, could have been improved on—or, come to that, Karl and Groucho for, respectively, the esteemed author of *Das Kapital* and the chief person in *A Night at the Opera*?

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The Narrative Art of the Bayeux Tapestry Master. By J. BARD MCNULTY Pp. viii+152 (AMS Studies in the Middle Ages 13) New York: AMS Press, 1989. $47 50.

J. Bard McNulty sees the Bayeux Tapestry as the masterpiece of a designer distinguished by his intellectual, quasi-literary handling of the Conquest narrative McNulty begins his discussion of overall narrative structure by insisting 'the Tapestry is not *like* a quest narrative; it *is* a quest narrative', and then divides the whole into seven episodes and two parts, 'Predicament' and 'Resolution' But much more compelling is his perceptive and detailed analysis of the Tapestry Master's ability to transcend the narrative's simple, left-to-right progression through time by presenting allusions to past and future events. Thus borders at the top and bottom of the main frame, often dismissed as purely decorative—though recently over-ingeniously read as a sustained running commentary on the main action—are shown to relate to that action in a number of ways. For instance, ghostly ships appear proleptically in the lower border where Harold's actions in the main frame can be understood as bringing nearer the likelihood of William's invasion fleet.

McNulty can also defend the Tapestry Master's intelligent ordering of scenes when earlier commentators have disparaged it, as where the depiction of King Edward's funeral seems to precede a view of his death-bed McNulty points out that action always moves in the direction in which its figures face, so that when men look from death-bed to funeral, even if this is from right to left, then we are intended to see the two scenes in their expected order. But why should the narrative suddenly move 'backwards' like this? Because, explains McNulty, in the succeeding scene two English noblemen make reference to King Edward's supposed dying wishes by pointing backwards, again to their left. But without the transposition of the death-bed and funeral, this reference simply couldn't be communicated; the two men could only gesture meaninglessly towards the funeral.

McNulty's fastidious attention to the Tapestry Master's clever ways of indicating links and disjunctions between scenes can elucidate notorious obscurities which have